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## BIOSECURITY DOG PROGRAMME COMMENCES

*The Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands commence a long-term biosecurity dog programme to prevent rats & mice from reaching South Georgia.*



The Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI) is delighted to announce the start of a new Biosecurity Dog Programme. This long-term programme follows intensive pilot studies and trials using specially trained rodent detection dogs to 'sniff out' rodents hiding on vessels or in cargo bound for South Georgia, and therefore to prevent them reaching South Georgia.

South Georgia was declared rodent-free in May 2018 following a £10 million habitat restoration programme led by the South Georgia Heritage Trust (SGHT). The new biosecurity dog programme is the best way to protect that legacy and to ensure that South Georgia remains rodent-free allowing native species rejuvenation.

Some species like the endemic South Georgia Pipit (the world's southernmost songbird), are already showing signs of recovery in the absence of rats and mice. They are now a common sight on the mainland where they were once reduced to a few off-shore tussac islands.

To deliver this keystone project, the GSGSSI have established a relationship with Working Dogs for Conservation (WD4C) who will provide ongoing training and support to our locally-based handler Naomi Baxter, and her dog Sammy.

Naomi says *“Training to become a dog handler with WD4C in Virginia USA was hard work, but I’m looking forward to putting what I have learned into practice, and incredibly satisfying to play a small part in protecting South Georgia.”*

Naomi & Sammy will search all kinds of vessels from cruise ships to yachts, fishing vessels to fishery patrol vessels, minimising the risk of rats and mice ever reaching South Georgia again. These skills and capabilities will not only benefit South Georgia, and there are already plans to use the biosecurity dog team to help prevent rodents from being introduced to rodent-free areas within the Falkland Islands.



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